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Animal Crackers

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Animal Crackers

Cosmetic Surgery

Most surgery is performed to improve an animal's health, but cosmetic surgery is done to change its appearance. In dogs, cosmetic procedures allowed under AKC rules are dewclaw removal, tail docking and ear cropping.

Ear cropping has been outlawed in the United Kingdom since 1895. The American Kennel Club has no official policy on ear cropping, although the American Veterinary Medical Association has recommended that breed associations delete mention of cropped ears in their breed standards. At its most recent meeting in July 1996, the AVMA defeated a resolution opposing ear cropping unless performed by a licensed veterinarian for therapeutic purposes only. There is no requirement that any dog's ears be cropped to compete in AKC events. Some breed clubs have revised their standards for traditionally cropped breeds to include a description of the ideal uncropped ear. Great Danes and schnauzers are two breeds where ears usually are cropped, but an increasing number of uncropped champions seems to indicate that judges do not evaluate show dogs on ears alone. However, there are still those who believe that cropped ears have an advantage in the show ring.

Tail docking and dewclaw removal are done in the first few days of life. Tail docking maintains a physical characteristic which has been considered "correct" for some breeds, especially gun dogs and terriers. Because tail injuries in working dogs might require amputation in later life when surgery would be more complex, docking newborn tails became standard practice. Dewclaw removal is done because these vestigial toes are easily injured. Breeders should be aware that some breed

standards require dewclaws.

There are a number of cosmetic procedures which would be considered change in appearance by artificial means and would make a dog ineligible to compete in AKC shows. These include restorative dental procedures, alteration of the location of the testes or insertion of an artificial testicle and removal of excessive skin folds. Although an umbilical hernia may be repaired, correction of inguinal, scrotal or perineal hernias would be a disqualification. Concealing defects by surgical intervention can only result in deterioration of a breed. AKC's Limited Registration provides for purebred companion animals.

In cats, de-clawing is used to prevent damage to furniture. This is a controversial procedure and many consider it mutilation. The same results may be obtained with tendonectomy which results in less destructive scratching. The claws are not removed and will require regular trimming.

UC Davis Book of Horses: A Complete Medical Reference Guide for Horses and Foals,

edited by Mordecai Siegal
(HarperCollins, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022. \$30.00 hardcover).

This comprehensive medical reference guide will be a valuable addition to the horse owner's library. It was written by thirty-seven authors, mostly present or past faculty members of the University of California at Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. The goal of the book is to help identify problems and recognize when it is necessary to call your veterinarian. In addition, there is information on breeds of horses, hus-

bandry, anatomy, nutrition, reproduction and much more, including an extensive glossary.

Diseases of dietary origin include colic (abdominal pain) and laminitis ("Founder"). "Horses have been designed by nature to be relatively continuous consumers of plants over relatively large areas of land. Many American horses currently are kept in environments of unusually high feed quality and nutrient density, with unusually restricted opportunities for exercise — similar to the situations faced by many American people." Thus, the increased likelihood of diet-related diseases.

Breeding management, pregnancy and parturition are well-covered. "A major problem in equine reproduction is that breed associations have imposed a breeding season on mares that does not necessarily coincide with the physiological breeding season. The 'universal birthdate' of January 1 results in the start of a breeding season in February which is not the physiological season for mares."

Tables give signs of disease — specific and nonspecific. The specific clinical signs include cough, diarrhea, discolored urine, lameness and incoordination. Non-specific signs are fever, inappetence, depression and lethargy (exercise intolerance). "The keys to the recognition of disease in the horse are daily observation and good record-keeping. A safe rule of thumb for deciding whether or not to call in a veterinarian is: if any of the specific signs occur in combination with one or more of the non-specific signs of disease, then a veterinarian should examine the horse. However, if the horse has a fever and/or exercise intolerance, a veterinarian should examine the animal.

Appendices cover zoonotic diseases; from horses to people, vaccinations and infectious disease control, diagnostic tests and transporting horses. There is a great deal to be learned from this most informative text.

The Quintessential Cat **by Roberta Altman**

(Macmillan Books, 1633 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. \$14.95 paperback).

This is an ideal gift book for cat lovers. It's an A to Z volume on just about everything about cats. It is "A Connoisseur's Guide to the Cat in History, Art, Literature and Legend."

Under A, we read about cats in advertising, Aesop's Fables, African and American Indian folktales and several breeds (Abyssinian, American shorthair and American wirehair), as well as well-known ailurophobes (having hatred and/or fear of cats). These include Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Mussolini, Genghis Khan, Hitler, Eisenhower and the composer Johannes Brahms. A quote from Wodehouse — "The real objection to the great majority of cats is their insufferable air of superiority."

Black cats were considered sacred by the ancient Phoenicians but during the Middle Ages became associated with black magic and were considered to be the personification of Satan and were massacred in various ways. But many superstitions associate black cats with luck. "Whenever the cat of the house is black, the lasses of lovers will have no lack."

Abraham Lincoln was a cat lover and astute observer as revealed by his well-known quip: "No matter how much cats fight, there always seem to be plenty of kittens."

Marmalade was a rescued stray cat adopted by a dog trainer who had several "celebrity" cats which knew sixty-seven tricks, including hissing, crying and knocking off glasses. Mercedes was a stray cat packed in a Mercedes Benz being shipped from England to Australia and survived after fifty days without food and water.

There are many programs where cats

are used therapeutically in nursing homes and institutions for the mentally ill. In one incident, some kittens were taken to a nursing home at Christmas. "There was one man in a wheelchair, the saddest person I'd ever seen. We started taking pictures of the residents holding the kittens and he rolled himself right to the front and said, 'I want a cat.' The nurses were stunned. They said they never heard him speak before."

Terms used to describe cats and their relationships include clowder (a group of older cats), kindle (a group of kittens) and gibcat (old English name for a tomcat — an unneutered male).

A list of resources includes humane, education and advocacy groups, humane societies, breed clubs and magazines. This is a book that will bring hours of enjoyment for the casual reader.

American Breeds

There are three native American breeds recognized by the American Kennel Club — the Boston terrier, the Chesapeake Bay retriever and the American water spaniel. Then there is the Australian shepherd which did not come from Australia but was brought to the United States by Basque sheep herders. Some say it is an American breed. The American foxhound was brought to this country by early settlers. The coonhounds have been developed in the United States from hounds brought in by immigrants.

Breeders in Boston began crossing the English bulldog with terriers in the mid-1800's. The breed has been recognized by AKC since 1893 and is shown in the Non-Sporting Group. In the mid-1900's it was the most popular AKC breed and represented about 25% of dogs entered in shows. It is friendly, lively, charming and intelligent. It is essentially a house pet — good with children and responds well to obedience training.

The Chesapeake Bay retriever is an excellent waterfowl dog, developed along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay in the early 1800's. It is said that they originated from a Newfoundland-type

dog rescued from an English ship wrecked off the coast of Maryland and bred to local duck dogs and retrievers. They were famous for retrieving under the worst of conditions. They have a double coat consisting of a thick undercoat and harsh, oily outercoat. It is said that duck hunters can warm their hands in their Chessy's undercoat, even when the dog is covered with ice.

The American water spaniel has been recognized by the AKC for a little over fifty years. Its origin is not clear, but includes various spaniels and retrievers. It was developed to meet the needs of hunters and trappers in the Midwest and along the Mississippi River. It was known as the "skiff dog" because it had to be small enough to carry easily in a skiff. Only a few hundred are registered each year and few are seen at the shows. The dog does the work of a spaniel and a retriever, working in the field and in the water.

Random Notes

At the Veterinary Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (VHUP), the number of parasitic infections diagnosed has been decreasing both in dogs and cats. The common parasites of puppies have been *Giardia*, *Toxocara Canis* (Roundworms) and *Isospora* (Coccidia). In older dogs, *Trichuris vulpis* (Whipworm) is most often diagnosed. Heartworm is found in about 2% of the dogs tested.

Toxocara cati is the most common intestinal parasite of cats found at VHUP. A few cats are found to be positive for heartworm. Cats under a year of age are more likely to be infected with a parasite than older cats. This possibly is because some immunity develops.

Routine checks for parasites and other health problems, as well as immunization schedules, do a lot to keep the incidence of serious disease low. Owners seem to understand preventive medicine and take better care of their animals. 🐾🐾